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Public Hearing
Judiciary Committee

**TESTIMONY Opposing HB 5531 (Raised) AAC THE CARE AND TREATMENT
OF PERSONS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER**

March 18, 2016

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Melissa Marshall. I live in West Hartford and I'm here today in my capacity as Coordinator of the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, a coalition representing people from all disability groups. I'm here today to urge you not to support Raised Bill 5531 An ACT CONCERNING THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.

Legislation similar, and in some cases identical to, this proposed legislation has been introduced and rejected at least three times since 1996. When it was last introduced in 2012 the Connecticut State Department of Mental Health and addiction Services and every advocacy group in the state stood together in opposing the proposed legislation as they do now.

Outpatient commitment does not prevent criminal behavior. Rather, coercive treatment contributes to resistance to medication and other treatment.

Forced outpatient commitment is very costly and almost impossible to enforce. Because of this 70% of states that have adopted it do not enforce it because of cost and the sheer difficulty of enforcing it. In addition, it tends to be disparately applied to people of color.

I urge you to support Connecticut in continuing to be a leader in recovery-based mental health services. It will not continue to be a leader if it enacts regressive legislation like that proposed in HB 5531. In these fiscal time it is incumbent on you to be especially vigilant about how taxpayer dollars are expended. Please oppose HB 5531. Please invest precious tax dollars in services that are evidence-based which will improve, not detract from the quality of life of people with psychiatric disabilities. These valuable services include supportive housing, jail diversion, crisis intervention training and wellness programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.